

Chapter 1 *Building the Coalition*

Module 2: Coalition Structure

Step Up and Step Out to build structure!

The first steps have been taken. The coalition has an idea of purpose and coalition members have been recruited. It is time to begin thinking about how the coalition will be structured to guide, manage, and implement future actions.

There are three different issues to consider at this point:

1. Organizational structure—whether or not committees are set up and how decisions are made
2. Meeting structure
3. The roles people will play



Organizational structure styles

There aren't rules that must be followed and you don't need an "architect to draw up the plans," but your coalition's "house" needs some structure. The best structure is the one that feels most comfortable, whether it is a "castle" or a "cabin!" Structure styles are discussed below.

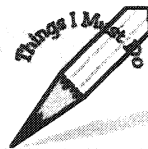
1. **One large single group with equal division of responsibilities. Everyone has equal input, responsibility, and authority.**

This style has very little structure. It works best for small groups where everyone shares everything equally.

Example:



The coalition decides to setup a booth at the city's health fair. The group divides up responsibilities so that everyone shares the load. Mary does publicity, Joe calls volunteers to staff the booth, Sue organizes the display, and Jim takes care of setup and cleanup.



Consider structure:

1. **One large single group with equal division of responsibilities**
2. **A coalition composed of committees with different functions**
3. **A coalition composed of task force groups and committees**

2. **A coalition composed of committees with different functions. Committees could be arranged by activities such as marketing, recruitment, accounting, fundraising, education, or program development.**

This structure is more complex. There are permanent committees formed within the coalition that assume responsibilities related to their function.

Example:



The coalition is contacted to determine whether or not there is an interest in setting up a booth for the city's health fair. The coalition determines the health fair fits as a marketing function and refers the issue to Betty who is the Education Committee Chairperson. Betty meets with the Education Committee to plan and staff a booth.

3. **The coalition is structured with task force groups and committees. A task force is a subgroup of the coalition—it can be an *ad hoc* (temporary) or a permanent committee. The task force can be created for:**



- ♥ Specific activities, i.e., a health fair, fun run, or supermarket tour
- ♥ Target audiences, i.e., elementary students, parents, and athletes
- ♥ Functions, i.e., marketing, fund raising, volunteer, or recruitment

Another option is to consider task force groups for each of the four components:



- ♥ **Community**—A group to coordinate opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity, provide support for school actions, and coordinate communication/marketing actions
- ♥ **Nutrition Education**—A group that includes teachers, school board members, school administrators, and parents of school-age children to address school curriculum actions
- ♥ **Physical Activity**—A group that includes physical education directors, school administrators
- ♥ **School Meals**—A group that includes the food service director and school administrators

This coalition structure is the most complex and has the most “layers” of responsibility.

Example:



A permanent task force has been created by the coalition to identify community awareness opportunities. When the "Community Awareness Task Force" identifies an upcoming health fair as a good opportunity, the coalition creates an "ad hoc" (temporary) committee for the purpose of planning and staffing a booth. Once the health fair is over, the "ad hoc" committee no longer exists.

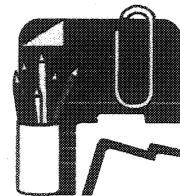
A note about advisory groups

Coalitions are sometimes formed to function as an Advisory Board. This is not desirable in the case of a school health initiative. Advisory boards do not take action, and as a result, progress can be very limited. It will be helpful to keep in mind the following distinctions:



- ♥ **Coalition:** The coalition is an active, decision-making group. The coalition takes responsibility for seeing that a strategic plan is developed and takes action on the goals it sets. It answers to the community-at-large.
- ♥ **Advisory Board:** An advisory board listens to members, makes recommendations, provides support, and provides a place to network. It takes no action on its own. The task forces (or committees) that report to the advisory board normally take actions. The advisory board has no authority over a task force. This often results in a lack of vision and mission with less coordination of efforts.

Meeting structure



Meetings can be set-up either formally or informally. Community factors and personalities of the key organizers will dictate the style of your coalition's meeting structure.

One coalition may decide they work most effectively with formal meeting structure and a "boardroom" type of atmosphere.

Example:



Members attend meetings in "business dress" and the structure follows predetermined "rules."

Another coalition may prefer to structure their organization very informally.

Example:



Members meet in very casual dress for coffee, or after work, or network over the phone or by e-mail.

More complete descriptions for these structures are given below.

Formal organizational structure:



- ♥ Elected officers
- ♥ Written by-laws
- ♥ Established responsibilities
- ♥ Established chain-of-command with specified task forces or committees

Formal meeting structure:

- ♥ Organized under *Robert's Rules of Order*
- ♥ Formal voting procedures and rules
- ♥ Formal, written agendas including time limits
- ♥ Written reports and minutes
- ♥ Set meeting schedules—open to the public



Informal organizational structure:

- ♥ Less formal or unwritten “rules” for conducting business matters
- ♥ An informal chain-of-command

Informal meeting structure:

- ♥ Less structure for meeting agendas with time allowed for agenda changes and open discussion
- ♥ Minutes, reports, agendas may or may not be written
- ♥ Meeting schedule varies with needs and availability of group
- ♥ Informal discussion format at meetings
- ♥ Decisions reached by consensus vs. formal votes

Building communication into structure

Whatever your structure, it is critical to effectively build in the methods that provide the best means to communicate meetings, minutes, announcements, events, and plans! Use postcards, letters, e-mail, phone calls, newsletters, or anything else that comes to mind!



To sum up structure

Structure does not have to be complicated. It is desirable to keep the nature of your coalition simple and flexible, without sacrificing organization. An excessive number of levels, task forces, and committees:

- ♥ Complicate efforts
- ♥ Increase the number of steps required for change
- ♥ Increase time needed to take action
- ♥ Make communication more difficult



An effective coalition structure will have very few bosses, and a large number of team players to carry your initiative's mission.



Key Roles within the Coalition

While contributions by all coalition members are critical to the initiative's success, a "core" group of organizers and several key roles will drive the coalition and determine its structure. Key roles in **Step Up and Step Out** are:



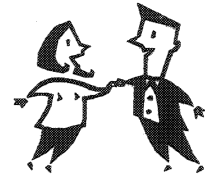
- ♥ Initiative coordinator
- ♥ Formal leaders
- ♥ Informal leaders

The initiative coordinator



The initiative coordinator serves as an organizer and catalyst for action. This person facilitates a wide variety of activities and responsibilities to keep the initiative moving forward with its actions. Although the role is key, the initiative coordinator works with other coalition leaders to share responsibility for coalition outcomes.

Organizers will want to choose this individual carefully. A good coordinator effects coalition success.



Initiative coordinator functions include:

- ♥ Network throughout the community to identify and assist with recruiting of new coalition members
- ♥ Coordinate and gather community information, including listening sessions
- ♥ Set-up staffing for clerical functions and meeting organization, i.e., developing agendas, determining meeting location, typing/distributing minutes, data collection, reports/updates, and other details
- ♥ Assist with establishing the structure of the coalition
- ♥ Assist with coalition goal/action planning
- ♥ Facilitate (see Module 5 in this Chapter for traits of a good facilitator)
- ♥ Identify win/win situations to promote benefits for participation in the coalition
- ♥ Assist with the development of a marketing plan
- ♥ Market the coalition and communicate actions throughout the community and region
- ♥ Help identify and problem-solve issues that make initiative actions difficult

“Super person?”

Does it sound like the coalition will need a “super person?”

This position does need a person who is a great organizer, but if the coalition does a good job of recruiting leaders and other members, there will be plenty of people to delegate responsibilities and actions!

Information about how to get leaders “on board” follows!

Step Up and Out to recruit and develop leaders!

1. As you recruit, look for individuals who motivate others to take action

Look for people who can cause others to take action rather than those who just “do” it themselves. A good manager isn’t necessarily a good leader. Good managers too often do everything themselves and they burn out quickly. A leader must be able to delegate and develop new leadership.

2. Recruit formal and informal leaders

Most organizations have both formal and informal leaders. Both of these types of leadership are very important to the coalition. The formal leader is often the “recognized” leader and the informal leaders are the ones who always seem to “be there” meeting and greeting, and getting things done. The following traits will help to distinguish each:

Formal Leaders:

- ♥ Recognize facilitators who manage meetings, problem-solve, and move participants toward action
- ♥ Provide administrative support
- ♥ Coordinate financial support where appropriate
- ♥ Coordinate communication
- ♥ Make decisions

Example:



Ted is frequently the “peacemaker” at Our Town coalition meetings. When the coalition was split on whether time should be divided between a health fair and a fun run, Ted helped everyone go through the pros and cons of different options so that they could reach a decision. Ted has problem-solving skills and should be developed as a formal leader.

Informal Leaders:

- ♥ Provide support for formal leaders
- ♥ Play key roles in modeling, guiding, and encouraging
- ♥ Create action

Example:



Martha just loves to talk on the telephone. She frequently calls people after a coalition meeting just because she likes to visit about the outcome. Martha

could really be an asset in encouraging members and should be developed as an informal leader.

3. Recruit people who are key business or community decision-makers

People who are “in power” don’t have to ask permission from someone else, so they make it possible for the coalition to take actions faster.

Example:



The owner of a hardware store can make a decision to participate in a community-wide “billboard” awareness campaign for healthy eating and physical activity, but an employee of the store, will need to go back to the owner and determine if there is an interest.

4. Make leadership recruiting and development a continuous process

It would be great if you didn’t need to worry about developing leaders...if coalitions could just operate with all participants involved as equals in decision-making and problem solving. Different mixtures of people, groups and power, make it necessary however, to find leaders who can unite people to share and direct the coalition’s vision and mission. Take time to develop your leaders!



Leadership Roles

Leadership roles will vary somewhat according to the structure, mission, and goals of the coalition, but leaders often serve by:

- ♥ Creating a positive attitude
- ♥ Developing a commitment to success
- ♥ Motivating and encouraging members
- ♥ Introducing and welcoming new coalition members; and recognizing their involvement
- ♥ Maintaining the vision and mission in strategy development
- ♥ Anticipating or clarifying what kind of work is needed in order to accomplish organizational goals
- ♥ Sharing work and recognition with colleagues

**Module Tip:**

There is no “right or wrong” structure for your coalition. The organization that works best for your coalition is the style that fits your community's size, resources and scope of the initiative's mission.

FAQs:

- ❑ **Question:** Is it okay for the structure of the coalition to change as the coalition develops?
- ❑ **Answer:** It is not only acceptable, but also normal to go through several variations on style until the coalition finds something comfortable.
- ❑ **Question:** How can you get people to step forward to assume leadership roles?
- ❑ **Answer:** Everyone needs recognition and reward for their efforts. Look around to see if partners are given recognition for the things that they do, and potential leaders are given support whenever possible. Keep in mind successful coalition outcomes also motivate greater involvement.

Module Glossary:

Advisory board: A group that listens, make recommendations and provides support, but takes no action on its own, and has no authority over coalition task forces or committees.

Task force: A subgroup of the coalition that is developed for specific activities, functions, or target audiences.

Ad hoc committee: A short-term committee with a very specific function and limited time commitment.



Leadership Worksheet

Is Your Coalition in a Good Position to Develop Leaders?

The following worksheet lists organizational structure factors that need to be in place to develop good leadership. Go through the following questions as a checklist to see how your coalition is doing and what you might need to work on.

1. Ask each question. If the answer is yes, place a checkmark in the box. A yes indicates no further action needed. An unchecked box means "no" and indicates there is a possible problem to reaching full leadership potential. These issues need to be addressed.
2. Write comments below each category as appropriate to use for future problem solving.
3. Take steps to identify problems and plan actions for improvement.
4. Take actions and check for effectiveness. Revise plan for action if necessary.

Meeting attendance

- ☐ Are meetings held often enough for the group to complete its tasks?
- ☐ Do members attend regularly?
- ☐ Do people participate just because the coalition's actions relate to their job?
- ☐ Are barriers to participation overcome?

Communication

- ☐ Is communication strong, including communication with those not at meetings?
- ☐ Is the role of each participant in the coalition clear?
- ☐ Are the coalition and participant's expectations for attendance, participation, and commitment clear?

Recruitment

- ☐ Does the coalition combine recruiting from professional ranks and the general public?
 - ☐ Do existing coalition leaders provide modeling, guidance, training, and new leadership development?
 - ☐ Does the coalition expect only the amount of work or commitment members are willing to provide?
 - ☐ Do new coalition members have the opportunity to take leadership roles?
 - ☐ Do old and new leaders understand the initiative's mission?
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Coalition actions

- ☐ Is the coalition active?
 - ☐ Do actions go beyond meetings and reach out into the community?
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Leadership skill development

- ☐ Are successors recruited and groomed to take over leadership positions?
 - ☐ Are the leaders competent in bringing about what needs to be done?
 - ☐ Do leaders manage meetings well?
 - ☐ Are leaders able to complete meeting actions or goals?
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A Role-Play Activity

Role-playing the coalition meeting at Anyville Elementary will provide an opportunity to identify and practice leadership skills.

Characters:

Supra Sidney, Initiative Coordinator	Timid Tina	Boisterous Bertha
Know it all Nathan	Friendly Fred	3 new members

Assign eight different coalition members to role-play the above “characters” and use the following scenario to act out an imaginary coalition meeting. After the role-play, use the questions that follow to discuss potential leadership skills.

Opening Scenario:

Members are arriving at Anyville Elementary for the Monthly Coalition meeting.

Supra Sidney is setting up the overhead projector to present her plan for a new community program. She has talked with the town librarian and recreation commission about combining resources to start a Saturday morning program that combines healthy reading activities with fitness activities. She is nervous because she really wants to convince the rest of the coalition her proposal will be an outstanding program to get more people involved.

Friendly Fred is going around the room, introducing himself to the new members, and asking each what brings them to the meeting.

Boisterous Bertha is complaining to **Supra Sidney** about the new school lunch policy that allows children to decline milk on their tray while Supra is trying to set up.

Know-it-all-Nathan is telling **Timid Tina** about how they really need to get on the stick and just organize a committee to change all of the vending machines in school.

1. Supra is acting as a ‘doer’, not as a catalyst for change. Why is it important for her to facilitate and delegate rather than ‘do’?
2. What identifies Friendly Fred as an informal leader? In what way could he become an asset to the coalition?
3. In what way could Supra direct Boisterous Bertha’s concerns for a positive outcome?
4. How could Know-it-all-Nathan be directed for positive outcomes?

Comments:

- Supra hasn't asked other coalition members to participate in program planning. She should have arrived early to set-up the projector so she would be free to greet and visit with members as they arrive.
- Fred appears to be a natural "recruiter." His skills could be developed.
- Supra needs to acknowledge and direct Bertha positively instead of ignore her. Bertha may be able to take a lead with school lunch.
- Know-it-all-Nathan needs development as an informal leader to head a committee to review possible vending machine changes.